1846 Healthy Temperance
(STIMULATING FOOD
& DRINK.)
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N.° III.

PAPERS
OF
SHAKERS
315
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Section 8.

Stimulating Food and Drinks.

Many people commence sowing the seeds of disease and infirmity at a very early age. It is true that many children are born unhealthy in consequence of the intemperate living and unhealthy state of their parents. But many through the mistaken kindness or indulgence of parents and nurses are fed with articles of food and various heterogeneous substances which, if the effects are not soon visible, will, at some period of life, produce their natural results, weakness, chronical complaints, nervous diseases, or some distressing periodical infirmity which cannot be easily eradicated. Then the doctor must be called for, and medical doses & drugs must be continually applied to patch up a broken constitution. Whereas, if they would seasonably employ & consult an experienced physician, well skilled in physiology, to teach them how to avoid disease and infirmity, they might escape much suffering, and probably save much expense as well as loss of time by sickness.

It is well known that those who are in the daily practice of using ardent spirits as a stimulous in their laborious employments, (formerly a general practice among laboring men) have become so habituated to it, that they find themselves unable to work without it; and therefore think it absolutely necessary to give strength to the nerves. But of late years it has been abundantly proved, by general & experience practice, that a laboring

man can perform more work, and do it better, without ardent spirits than with — that when the stimulant power of the spirit is gone, the system is left as much weaker, and falls as much below its natural strength as it had been raised above it; and that this course of excitement is not only constantly undermining the strength of the system, but is gradually & imperceptibly generating diseases which will in time, if the practice is continued, destroy the natural powers of the body & terminate in death.

This is the natural effect of all stimulants, in proportion to their stimulating qualities. The ardent spirits are considered the most powerful stimulants among the articles which have obtained a general use among mankind; yet there are others which have a similar tendency, according to their nature, to injure the physical powers of the constitution. Of these we might name a great variety; but the most common are, opium, tobacco, tea, coffee & animal flesh; and to these may be added the various kinds of spices & other heating substances, such as pepper, pimento, allspice, cloves, cinnamon, horseradish, calamus &c. add pickled cummbers. &c.

All these articles have a natural tendency to corrupt the system & generate diseases when intermixed and used with our daily food. Doubtless some, and perhaps the most or all of them, in their simple state may be useful in the hands of experienced & skilful physicians as articles of medicine, either of internal or external application. But mixed & compounded with various other articles in our daily food & used as condiments

to rich & otherwise highseasoned dishes, they are considered by the most eminent physicians as very injurious to the human constitution. ~~We may search the world over~~

The natural tendency of such mixtures is to create a foul stomach. This is unavoidable, as these various articles are very unequally digested, they cannot asimilate so as to form a pure & healthy chyle in the stomach. Consequently those who are in the habit of living on such diet must often take physic to cleanse & restore the morbid state of the stomach and intestines, or suffer the consequences of this disordered state of the system: for a disordered state of the stomach and intestines will soon throw the whole system into disorder, and then sickness or disease of some kind must necessarily follow.

Taking physic therefore is but the choice of two evils: it is adopting the less to prevent the greater; and yet by constantly drugging & dosing the health of thousands is entirely ruined. Very few people are aware of the injurious effects of physic upon the constitution. It is the opinion of some of the most experienced physicians that the excessive use of medicine has destroyed more lives than it has ever saved. It is well known among physiologists that every dose of physic, by its extraordinary excitement of the nervous system, has a tendency to weaken the nerves of the stomach & bowels and render them less able to digest & chymify their food; and that this is one principal cause of dyspepsy & its dire effects. Were this fact generally known, we might reasonably suppose that people would be more careful by a proper regimen, or suitable regulation of diet, to keep the stomach in good order, so as to avoid the necessity of taking physic. But many

would much rather risk their health than lay any restrictions upon their appetites: and not a few are unwilling to believe that any thing which suits their taste can injure their health. Of this they feel as confident as the drunkard, who is sure that his drams are good for him; because he is fully convinced by experience that he cannot possibly do without them. A striking evidence of a depraved appetite is clearly manifest in all such cases.

I have investigated this subject with much care and attention, have examined the opinions, experiments and reasons of the most noted & experienced physicians & physiologists in Europe & America, as published by medical writers, which together with my own experience & observation, particularly as to the nature & tendency of these stimulating & narcotic substances generally used among us as articles of food, condiments or medicine, and I am fully convinced that wherever these articles are freely and constantly used, the nervous systems of those who use them are injured in proportion to the degree of excess in which they are indulged. This is very perceptible in the various efforts which require the use of the nerves, and plainly shows a nervous weakness. It appears in the tremulous motion of the hands and arms when attempting to write or do any thing which requires a steady hand. It discovers itself in the nerves of the brain by the difficulty of fixing the attention & memory, or devoting the thoughts & labors of the mind to any particular subject of contemplation, and is the principal cause of the nervous headache. It is also perceived in the nerves of the stomach by the loss of

appetite and difficulty of digestion, and, as before observed, is the great cause of dyspepsy.

The intimate connection between the nerves of the head and stomach is well known. Any powerful stimulous, such as ardent spirits of any kind, opium, tobacco &c. taken into the stomach, will very soon show their effects on the nerves of both, by causing a belching of the stomach & dizziness of the brain, which not only benumbs the rational powers of the mind, but often wholly deprives a person of his senses during the continuance of its stimulating power. These effects must necessarily impair the strength of the nervous system; and where the practice is often repeated, it must in time greatly blunt, if not wholly destroy all the nerves of the body, which is often the case with confirmed drunkards.

Tho alcohol is considered as one of the most powerful stimulants taken into the human stomach; yet every article of a stimulating nature has its effect on the system in proportion to the degree of stimulating power contained in it. And whenever the nerves are stimulated beyond their natural strength, they must of necessity gather weakness; like an elastic spring strained beyond its natural capacity, its strength is wasted, and it cannot produce the effect it once did. And when the nerves are weakened by over action, the body is much more exposed to become diseased by improper diet. Indeed it is a well known fact that weakly people are much more liable to have their health injured by unsuitable diet, than those who have a strong & vigorous constitution.

It is the prevailing opinion of many people in this country,

country that animal food gives more strength & vigor to the body than a vegetable diet. This mistaken opinion is as easily accounted for as the drunkard's great estimation of ardent spirits, and upon the same principle too. It affords indeed a present stimulous to the nerves, animates the feelings, and makes the deceived soul imagine himself more able to endure fatigue; but adds not the least particle of real strength to the body. And when the power of that stimulous is gone, his spirit sinks as much below par as it had been raised above. Where then is the gain? Surely there can be none to a person in health. But to an invalid whose strength is prostrated by some infirmity, some kind of stimulant may be necessary as a medicine, upon the same principle that the Apostle Paul advised Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake, and for his often infirmities.

The real nourishment contained in any kind of food or drink consists, not in its stimulating power; but in its nutricious quality. The benefit therefore to be derived from food to a person in health, must be in proportion to the quantity of nutriment contained in it, separate from its stimulating quality. And it is well known that there are many articles of vegetable food which contain much more nutriment than is to be found in animal food of any kind. By experiments that have been made, it is found that, meat of various kinds contains, on an avarage, but 35 lbs of clear nutriment in a 100 lbs. while wheat contains 85 lbs on an avarage; and peas and beans still more.

An Extract from "The Teacher of Health," published in Boston.

Health and Economy. These commonly go hand in hand. What is really and truly economical, is generally healthful, and the contrary. A writer to the editor of one of our religious papers makes the following statement, which we wish some of our readers would deeply ponder.

"I have saved nearly fifty dollars from my ordinary expences within the year past, for the cause of mercy; and that, as I believe, without injury to my health. Tea, coffee and tobacco formerly cost at least ten dollars a year; and now I am manifestly more healthy without them. When will men cease purchasing themselves misery, in the consequences of sensuality and pride, with Christ's money?"

Testimonies from Dr Robert Thomas.

The man who wishes to be healthy, live long & die without sickness, either of body or mind, must submit to live regularly, and be temperate in all his habits.

A life of irregularity & intemperance has the certain effect to destroy persons of the best constitution, even in the prime of life; while on the other hand, one of regularity and temperance will frequently preserve men for a length of time, who are of a very delicate or bad constitution, and far gone in years. Witness Lewis Cornaro.

That irregularities of diet, repletion, and unwholesome food, are the origin of many diseases, cannot admit of a doubt, and that the preservation of health much depends on a proper regimen, is equally obvious.

It has been wisely observed by Hippocrates, (who has been called the father of medicine) that if a man eats sparingly and drinks little, he is nearly certain of bringing no disease upon himself, and that a moderate supply of food nourishes the body best. The quantity of food which nature really requires for her support is very small; and he that lives temperately, and eats moderately at each meal, stands fair to enjoy sprightliness, vivacity and freedom of spirits. To have a clear head, we must have a clean stomach; for this is the grand reservoir in which the food is first deposited, and from thence is distributed throughout all parts of the body.

An error into which many people fall, is that of eating too much at once. If the stomach be filled with with a greater quantity of food than it can easily bear, or what is proper, its coats are stretched beyond their natural

tone, and rendered incapable of performing its digestive powers, the food being longer retained than by the laws of the circulation it ought to be, and undergoing a disorderly fermentation, gives rise to crudities, sour eructations, flatulency, headach and stupor: for the stomach having, ~~being~~ an intimate connection with the brain & nervous system by sympathy, whenever the one of them is disordered, the other seldom fails of partaking in the calamity.

He that consults his health must check his appetite, and invariably rise from the table with the ability and disposition to eat and drink still more than he has done.

Attention to diet and temperance in all other respects is not only necessary for the preservation of health, but is likewise of great importance in the cure of diseases, and many of them indeed may be cured by a suitable diet alone.

It is the prevailing opinion of many people in in this country, that animal food is necessary to give strength and vigor to the body, and will enable a person to endure fatigue & hardship much better than a vegetable diet. From a faithful examination of this subject, I am fully convinced that this opinion is erroneous. People are greatly deceived in this matter ~~A person~~ Any person of common capacity & ordinary intelligence who will fairly investigate the subject will soon be convinced that a ~~person~~ vegetable suitable diet, will not only preserve the body in better health, but afford more permanent strength & vigor than any animal food that can be obtained, exclusive of and independant of vegetable food. There is indeed more real strength & nourishment in one pound of bread than two of meat

Holy Mount October 3. 1846.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Your kind letter was truly acceptable and satisfying to my feelings. You have returned your kind thanks for the use of my mss. and you are kindly welcome. I am glad you have taken copies of them; for it is quite uncertain whether I shall ever be able to finish the mss. on diet, having constantly on hand more than I can conveniently get along with, besides the frequent writing which the business of the office requires, together with the little occasional calls which gospel love & union forbid me to decline; (such for instance as this little letter.)

What I had in contemplation to add to those manuscripts consists principally of testimonies to confirm my sentiments on diet, taken from the accounts of various nations who live mostly on vegetable diet, and from the accounts of many individuals who have proved it for many years, and some through life. Some years ago a Society of physicians in Philadelphia, published a periodical Journal of Health, in which they recommended a vegetable diet as most conducive to health. In one of their Numbers they stated that more than half the human race subsisted on vegetable diet. This was disputed by some of their readers. Search was then made into the history of the different nations, and the accounts given in various voyages and travels, and it was found that more than two thirds of the inhabitants of the earth subsisted mostly on vegetable diet.

These included a very large portion of the poor inhabitants of England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Germany, with those of other nations of Europe, who were not able to obtain meat. Also most of the common people in the extensive dominions of Russia and China, together with the principal part of the numerous inhabitants of the many South Sea Islands; and also the inhabitants of the Islands of Japan, in the Indian Ocean, which are said to be very populous. These, it is said, eat no animal food, excepting those on the sea coast, who occasionally eat fish. The inhabitants of the interior live mostly on rice, which they prize above all other diet; and think that any country must be very poor that does not raise plenty of rice.

It is also stated and proved by many witnesses, that vegetable eaters, and especially those in the South sea Islands, are remarkably well formed in body & limbs, tall straight & very active, and remarkably strong and vigorous; very friendly in their dispositions, and appear to possess remarkably bright intellects. On the other hand, those barbarous nations who live almost entirely on animal food, particularly those who inhabit the cold northern & southern regions of the globe, where no vegetable food can not be raised, are represented as short, thick and dwarfish in form, unsocial, savage & treacherous in their manners, dull and stupid in intellect, and very filthy in their habits.

Some of these savage nations, particularly those in the Fiji Islands, who live on animal food, are Canibals — often at war with their neighbors, and kill & eat their prisoners taken in war. Such is represented to be generally the great difference between those savage nations that live mostly on animal, and those that live chiefly on vegetable food. Doubtless there are exceptions; but in general it is very evident that those nations who subsist mostly or wholly on vegetable diet, are much more mild, social & friendly than those whose principal living is animal food. And it is universally represented that vegetable eating nations posess by far the brightest intellects. Of this there is not the least doubt: for it has been fairly proved by the experience of many individuals.

Health, strength and activity, both of body & mind, are well known to be the general attendants on vegetable diet, while the contrary rarely ever fails to follow in the track of those whose principal diet is animal food. That the Divine blessing is on the side of temperance cannot be disputed, and therefore all who wish to enjoy it, will be in a fair way to gain it by obedience to the laws of temperance.

But dear Sister, I have already extended my letter further than I intended; but when I begin to write on a subject so interesting to my feelings, I hardly know when or where to stop. The rich treasures of the gospel are my all, and I want to see an increase in every branch of it, temporal as well as spiritual: And I consider that self-denial in all needless and pernicious indulgence is the surest way to find an increase. I want to see the young & rising generation, who must be our successors, engaged in denying themselves of every needless indulgence, before they get into habits which they will find

very difficult to control. I know by experience what struggles I had to overcome the various powerful propensities of my nature; but I was determined not to give out, knowing as I did, that those propensities must be subdued by <u>faith</u> and <u>obedience</u> or else by <u>fire</u>, which would bring me under far greater sufferings than I should endure by faithful obedience to the cross. I want the young to know the great blessing of taking up their crosses while young, that they need not through unfaithfulness, fall under those sufferings which they cannot escape but by faithful obedience while young.

Dear Sister, please accept my kind gospel love & blessing, and give of the same to the rest of the good Ministry, for you know I love them, and can freely bless you all, Amen.

Seth Y. Wells.

Copy of a Letter to
Sally Loomis of
Harvard

SHAKER COLLECTION